

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2029
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONGEN HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CONFIDENTIAL MANILA 4374

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS SAIGON WHEN MINIMIZE IS LIFTED

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, XC, ASEAN
SUBJECT: MARCOS ON INDOCHINA

REF: A. WELLINGTON 0918
B. MANILA 4230 (NOTAL)

1. LEE KUAN YEW SPEECH REPORTED REF (A) REFLECTS, IN
SOMEWHAT DARKER TONES, SOME OF THOUGHTS WHICH PRESIDENT
MARCOS HAS BEEN TURNING OVER IN HIS MIND RECENTLY. I HAVE
HAD TWO RATHER LONG AND INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM IN
PAST FEW DAYS, AND WE HAVE DISCUSSED INDOCHINA EVENTS
DISPASSIONATELY, BUT IN SOME DETAIL.

2. LIKE LEE, MARCOS SEEMS TO FEEL THAT HANOI VICTORY OVER
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ALL INDOCHINA IS FOREGONE CONCLUSION. I HAVE SAID THERE

IS EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE SAIGON HAS CAPABILITY OF DRAWING DEFENSIVE LINE WHICH WILL PRESERVE THIRD AND FOURTH MILITARY REGIONS AND THEREBY HOLD THE MEKONG DELTA, MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR HANOI TO CONSOLIDATE LAOS AND CAMBODIA.

MARCOS HAS POINTED TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE PENCHANG FOR INTERNECINE SQUABBLING, WHICH HE BELIEVES WILL BE FATAL. EVEN IF LINE NORTH OF SAIGON WERE HELD, HE FEELS IT WOULD BE FOR ONE DRY SEASON ONLY.

3. IN DISCUSSING SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY, MARCOS HAS LIMITED HIS ATTENTION TO INDOCHINA. HE FEELS THAILAND WILL NATURALLY SEEK PROTECTION OF PEKING AGAINST HANOI. I POINTED OUT THAT, IF THERE WERE A COMPLETE HANOI VICTORY IN ALL INDOCHINA, U.S. AND PRC WOULD HAVE COMMON INTEREST IN PREVENTING SOVIETS FROM ESTABLISHING MILITARY BASES THERE. MARCOS AGREES, BUT FEELS PEKING'S METHOD OF PREVENTING SOVIET CONTROL MIGHT BE THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT CHINESE HEGEMONY. I AGREED THAT MIGHT BE ULTIMATE PEKING OBJECTIVE, BUT DOUBTED PRC CAPACITY TAKE ON THAT TASK IN NEAR FUTURE.

4. MARCOS HAS SAID NOTHING TO ME TO SUGGEST THAT HE HAS DIMINISHED CONFIDENCE IN HIS RELIANCE ON U.S. SECURITY COMMITMENT. HOWEVER, THERE IS GENERAL ATMOSPHERE AMONG MOST PHILIPPINE POLITICAL OBSERVERS WHICH REFLECTS WORLD PRESS AND PUBLIC CONCERN THAT U.S. HAS LOST WILL TO CARRY THROUGH ON ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS. VERY FACT THAT MARCOS HAS AVOIDED ANY COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT, OR ANY REACTION TO PRESIDENT FORD'S WEST COAST STATEMENTS ABOUT REAFFIRMATION OF COMMITMENTS, REFLECTS PHILIPPINE DELICADEZA WHICH SHUNS UNPLEASANT AND EMBAARRASSING SUBJECT.

5. IF ASEAN SUMMIT MEETING, WHICH IS SUBJECT REF B, ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE IN NEAR FUTURE, IT WOULD APPEAR LIKELY THAT PREVAILING SENTIMENT WILL REFLECT RATHER GLOOMY LINES PRONOUNCED BY MARCOS AND LEE. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, ASEAN LEADERS WOULD PROBABLY BE FAR LESS IMPRESSED BY STENTORIAN REITERATION OF U.S. DETERMINATION TO STAND BY COMMITMENTS THAN THEY WOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY A CLEAR-CUT U.S. DETERMINATION TO AID ASEAN TO BECOME MORE "RESILIENT," THROUGH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID, AS WELL AS THROUGH

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